

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2019

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CONFIDENTIAL BAGHDAD 560

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, MASS, IZ

SUBJECT: GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT PROSPECTS IN IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 495; STATE 112308

1. BAGHDAD REFTEL TRANSMITTED SEPARATELY TO DEPARTMENT (BEIRUT 6392). IT WAS NOT ORIGINALLY TRANSMITTED TO DEPARTMENT BY OVERTURE. IT REPRESENTED ONLY EXPRESSION OF INTEREST ABOUT WHICH WE HAD NO BACKGROUND. AS STATED IN REFTEL WE WERE NOT EVEN AWARE OF TYPE OF A/C IN WHICH INTEREST HAD BEEN EXPRESSED. SUBSEQUENTLY WE WERE TOLD BY IRAQI REPRESENTATIVE WITH WHOM GRUMMAN REP MCCLEOD HAD SPOKEN THAT MCCLEOD HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE OBJECTION TO SALE OF THIS A/C SINCE IT WAS UNARMED, ESSENTIALLY DEFENSIVE A/C. WE CANNOT VOUCH FOR THIS STATEMENT SINCE MCCLEOD DISCUSSED WITH US ONLY GRUMMAN'S INTEREST IN SALE OF AIRLINES COMPUTER RESERVATIONS AND TICKETING SYSTEM.

2. I FIND POSITION AS STATED STATE REFTEL SHORTSIGHTED AND A DEPARTURE FROM PREVIOUS POLICY. IS POLICY TOWARD MILITARY TYPE EQUIPMENT SALES TO IRAQ SO SET IN CONCRETE THAT EXPLORATORY DISCUSSION, LOOKING TOWARD DELIVERIES IN PERHAPS TWO TO THREE YEARS TIME, CANNOT EVEN TAKE PLACE? IF THIS IS SO, THEN DEPARTMENT'S POSITION IN PERMITTING LOCKHEED TO CONTINUE PROLONGED NEGOTIATIONS FOR C-130S AND CIVILIAN VERSION WOULD APPEAR TO BE DISCRIMINATORY AGAINST GRUMMAN.

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3. IN ADDITION, IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT KURDISH WAR WAS ELEMENT IN DEPARTMENT POLICY PROHIBITING MILITARY TYPE SALES. NOW THAT WAR IS OVER AND RAPPROCHEMEENT WITH IRAN IS FAR DOWN THE ROAD, IS IT NOT TIME TO RE-EXAMINE OUR POLICY, AT LEAST FOR NON-LETHAL ITEMS?

4. USINT CONTINUES TO OPERATE UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT ONE OF OUR BASIC AIMS IN IRAQ IS TO UNDERCUT MAJOR REMAINING SOVIET PRESENCE AND SOURCE OF INFLUENCE; SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. IRAQIS ARE NOW PURCHASING ITEMS FROM BRITISH, FRENCH, ITALIANS, SPANISH AND OTHER NON-COMMUNIST SOURCES. IN ADDITION, THEY ARE KEENLY INTERESTED IN OBTAINING 120 AUGUSTA BELL HELICOPTERS FROM ITALY (40 EACH MODELS 109, 205, AND 212), AND ARE ALSO DISCUSSING WITH BRITISH PURCHASE OF UK HELICOPTERS (TYPE UNKNOWN) ON WHICH THEY WOULD LIKE U.S. ORINANCE. I HAVE NOT BEEN REQUESTED BY ANY PARTY TO ASSIST, BUT ITALIAN CHARGE TOLD ME THAT ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS TAKING MATTER OF HELICOPTERS UP IN WASHINGTON THROUGH ITALIAN EMBASSY.

5. IN CONCLUSION, WHILE I HAVE NO CONFLICT WITH DEPARTMENT'S POLICY ON PROHIBITING SALE OF LETHAL ITEMS AND MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS TO IRAQ AS LONG AS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS REMAIN BROKEN AND IRAQ MAINTAINS ITS PUBLICLY HARD LINE ON ISRAEL, I BELIEVE IT IS SHORTSIGHTED TO PROHIBIT EVEN PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF SALE OF NON-LETHAL ITEMS. I ALSO STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT USG REVIEW OF BASIC POLICY ON MILITARY SALES TO IRAQ, WHICH DATES TO 1967, IS LONG OVERDUE.

LOWRIE

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